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Good afternoon Chairmen Fox and Coleman, Ranking Members Rebimbas and Kissel, and Members of the Judiciary Committee. I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill Number 6657: An Act Concerning Sentencing and Risk Reduction.

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for raising this important legislation that was proposed by the House Republican Caucus.

During the 2011 session, the General Assembly passed legislation permitting the Department of Corrections to establish an earned risk reduction credit program which essentially reduces inmates' sentences for good conduct, obedience to prison rules, and for participating in approved programming and activities. While this may be a useful program for some inmates, the House Republicans opposed the application of this program because it is available to many of our most hardened criminals. Under the current law, only inmates sentenced for the following crimes are prohibited for early release: murder, capital felony, arson murder, 1st degree, aggravated sexual assault or home invasion. Sex offenders, child molesters, kidnappers, robbers, and many other violent criminals are eligible to participate in the early release program.

Since 2011, the House Republican Caucus has continually proposed legislation to ban violent offenders from participating in the early release program. The bill before you today, HB 6657, would limit persons who have committed crimes that statutorily require them to serve 85% of their sentence as imposed by the court from participating in the early release program. Examples of those criminals who are required to serve 85% of their sentences include murderers, rapists, kidnappers, robbers, and burglars. This is certainly a step in the right direction in keeping violent criminals behind bars.

I urge the Judiciary Committee to pass House Bill 6657. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation, and I look forward to the opportunity to debate this bill with the full General Assembly.

Thank you.